

[Director – EUMC, A-1060 Wien; Rahlgasse 3]

Mr Dror Feiler
European Jews for a Just Peace
P.O. Box 59506
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Vienna, 28 November 2005
EUMC/BW/ID/ht
Doc.ref.: 8158

Dear Mr. Feiler,

Thank you for your interest in our work, and, in particular, for your contribution to our ongoing initiatives regarding the development of data collection guidelines and a working definition of antisemitism.

The EUMC report on antisemitism, published in March 2004, pointed to a serious lack of reliable and comparable statistical data on antisemitic incidents in the Member States; due largely to the absence of a common working definition and data collection methodology and guidelines. A major task of the EUMC is to work towards comparability by developing common indicators and working definitions and methodologies, which could be used by other international organisations. It is also the task of the EUMC to develop precise and reliable working definitions for data collection in order to improve our understanding of such phenomena, and to provide a clear picture of the situation.

In this context, in November 2004, in Vienna representatives of OSCE/ODIHR, the European Jewish Congress, the American Jewish Committee, the American Jewish Committee - Berlin Office, and the EUMC discussed the possibility of a common approach to data collection on antisemitism. During the meeting, draft guidelines for data collection on antisemitism and a working definition were discussed in an effort to improve data comparability, and with a view to presenting them to primary data collectors (government and civil society) at both national and international level. Several organizations and individual experts were consulted and contributed to the discussions, including: The Community Security Trust, the Consistoire of France, the Stephen Roth Center of Tel Aviv University, the Berlin Anti-Semitism Task Force, the American Jewish Committee the Jacob Blaustein Institute for the Advancement of Human Rights, the Anti-Defamation League,

European Monitoring Centre
on Racism and Xenophobia

Observatoire Européen des
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B'nai B'rith International, the Tolerance Unit of ODIHR/OSCE, Prof. Yehuda Bauer, Academic Advisor to the International Task Force on the Holocaust, and others.

The draft guidelines and working definition were then elaborated further by the EUMC, with input from expert, in order to assess their functionality and to ensure that they corresponded to the approach presented in the 2004 EUMC Antisemitism Report. The report referred to the possibility that criticism of Israel might be considered antisemitic under certain circumstances therefore requiring careful assessment on a case-by-case basis:

"... One should always keep in mind that concrete instances of verbal attacks on Israel can, in fact, only be judged according to the historical, political, and situational context in which they are launched – and according to who launches them... Therefore, in order to be able to draw any valid conclusions about texts that criticise Israel, we need to conduct thorough and systematic analyses that will highlight different possible interpretations, account for their context of production as well as their context of reception, and make systematic use of the methodological tools provided by different social scientific disciplines" (EUMC Antisemitism Report, 2004, p. 241)

The EUMC forwarded the draft guidelines and working definition to its RAXEN National Focal Points for further feedback. More specifically, the National Focal Points were asked to liaise with primary data collectors in their countries in order to provide the EUMC with input regarding the effectiveness and relevance of both to the specific situation in their Member State.

Currently the draft guidelines and working definition, which should be viewed as 'work in progress', are under review in the light of feedback received, with a view to redrafting them in 2006. We would welcome your contribution.

With my best regards,

A handwritten signature in blue ink, which appears to read "Beate Winkler".

Beate Winkler
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